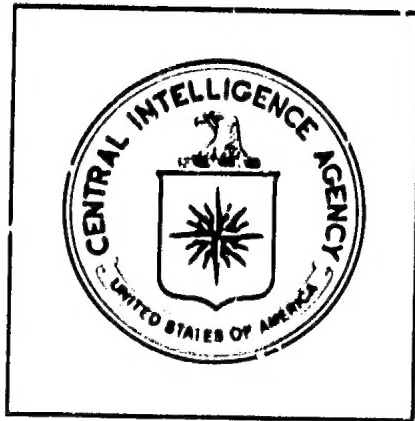


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North Korea: More of the Kim Clan

With the possible exception of Nicolae Ceausescu in Romania, Kim Il-song has made more extensive use of family members to consolidate his political power than have the heads of other Communist states.

--Kim Chong-il

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the son of Kim Il-song by an earlier marriage, became a candidate member of the Political Committee of the Korean Workers Party (KWP) in late 1973 and is being groomed to succeed his father

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--Kim Il-song's uncle, younger brother, and wife are all members of the Political Committee.

--Five additional committee members have been identified in Japanese and South Korean biographical dictionaries as married to cousins of Kim Il-song.

Kang Yang-uk, the maternal uncle of Kim Il-song, is the highest ranking of the North Korean leader's relatives. Kang graduated from Chuo University in Japan in 1925, returned home to take up seminary studies, and throughout World War II was pastor to a Presbyterian congregation. By the late 1940s, he was a ranking member of Kim Il-song's government, charged with the political organization of North Korea's several hundred thousand Christians. Today, Kang is the third-ranking member of the Political Committee, second vice president of the government, and chairman of the Korean Democratic Party, one of two minor parties that exist on paper to provide a facade of democracy. Kang has made frequent visits to the Middle East and sub-Saharan Africa to strengthen Pyongyang's ties to that region, but his role is largely a ceremonial one.

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Kim Yong-chu, the general secretary's younger brother, holds a lower ranked but more politically sensitive post in the party hierarchy than Kang Yang-uk. He came to prominence in 1961 by taking charge of the Central Committee's Organization and Guidance Department. The department--initiator of all decisions regarding KWP personnel--has enormous power. As its chairman, and earlier as its deputy chairman, Kim Yong-chu is said to have managed a series of purges aimed at increasing personal loyalty to his elder brother. Kim is assumed to still head the department, although his deputy is now commonly identified with party organizational work. In July 1972, Kim was named chief North Korean representative on the North-South Coordinating Committee--which was set up to explore possibilities for political interchange. This was largely a prestige assignment, and Kim did virtually no work.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, foreign observers regarded Kim Yong-chu as Kim Il-song's designated successor. His career on the Political Committee advanced rapidly, from a freshman candidate member in 1966 to the top-ranked member in a non-ceremonial slot by 1970. In 1973, however, Kim Yong-chu slipped from 6th to 13th place in the North Korean hierarchy. His fall coincided with persistent reports of medical problems, and his health is now said to permit only two or three hours of work daily. This, combined with the growing interest in Kim Chong-il as a successor, has caused a decrease of foreign speculation about Kim Yong-chu's political future.

Kim Song-ae, wife of Kim Il-song, ranks last among the candidate members of the Political Committee, the only woman on that august body. She joined the committee in late 1971, at roughly the same time that she became chairman of the Korea Democratic Womens Union (KDWU). As head of the KDWU, Kim Song-ae is responsible for the political and economic mobilization of the female population.

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Otherwise, little is known of her political influence, although analysts in Seoul and diplomats in Pyongyang claim that she has been waging an unsuccessful battle to increase her own power at the expense of her stepson, Kim Chong-il.

There are occasional reports of high-level dissatisfaction with Kim Il-song's favoring of his relatives, but nepotism is not unusual in a society given to clannishness, as in Korea, nor in a political system where the base of the ruling elite has been progressively narrowed.

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